

Raymond Open Space Plan



**Raymond Conservation Commission
April, 2009**

“Maine’s principal advantage in today’s global economic competition is our Quality of Place. We have majestic mountains, unbroken forests, open fields, wild rivers, pristine lakes, a widely-celebrated coast, picturesque downtowns, lively arts and culture, authentic historic buildings, and exceptional recreational opportunities. We must learn to think of them as the basic infrastructure of Maine’s future prosperity.”

Quality of Place and Job Growth: A New and Needed Maine Investment Strategy, 2nd Report of the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place, (May 2008)

Acknowledgements

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The Raymond Conservation Commission members are John Rand, Co-Chair Elizabeth Algeo, Co-Chair, William J Fraser, Mark Gendron, Russ Hutchinson, Peter Marcinuk, James Ross, Kimberly Rowe, Ben Severn, Louise Van Winkle.

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Introduction

Why do an Open Space Plan?

In 2004 the Town of Raymond approved their Comprehensive Plan which set out town policies for safeguarding water quality, protection of shared natural resources, conservation of prime forest and agriculture land, preservation of the Town's scenic areas, increase of open space, and the creation of trails. The plan gave the Raymond Conservation Commission (RCC) the responsibility for implementing strategies to achieve those policies; specifically, the RCC was tasked with creating an Open Space Plan for the prioritization of open space purchases. Creating an inventory of Raymond's natural resources and open spaces was the first step in that planning process.

Open Space Plan Goals

- Develop Open Space Plan that engages the community
 - Inventory and identify our most valuable Natural Resources
 - Support and promote working forests and agriculture
 - Link open spaces
 - Maintain and create trail systems for recreation (hiking, skiing, biking, snowmobiling, hunting, ATV [where appropriate])
 - Preserve our community character - one of exceptional land and water quality, recreational opportunity and natural resources that are vital to the local economy
-

What are the key recommendations of the Open Space Plan?

1. Engage in discussions with landowners to begin a conversation about land protection and explore which of numerous methods of protection would best meet the needs of the landowner and the Town.
2. Determine the requirements for securing town funds for land conservation.
3. Identify opportunities and processes to apply for state and federal grants.
4. Build partnerships in order to leverage funding opportunities, conservation capacity, and experience.
5. Provide information for landowners and citizens about working forest and farmland and open space values in Raymond.

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Who developed the Open Space Plan?

The RCC is comprised of eight to ten citizens of the Town and was supported for this effort by the Town's Contract Planner.

How did the Open Space Planning process work?

The Open Space Planning process has three primary objectives: 1) to develop an Open Space and Natural Resources Inventory, 2) to identify and prioritize the functional values associated with the town's open space and natural resource areas, and 3) to recommend policies to promote conservation of the town's important open spaces.

To achieve these objectives, the RCC gathered and mapped a broad set of data to create an inventory of many of the town's natural resources. The RCC then analyzed the information to assess the natural resources based on their importance to the ecology and the socio-economics of the town. In early 2007 the RCC developed a 25 minute presentation on the natural resources which ran for several months on the public access channel. In December 2007 the RCC held a public workshop to gather input and to discern community values about natural areas. The information gathered from the public workshop was integrated into the mapping and inventory information to depict the natural resources of the town in a manner that reflected the importance of their functions and their value to the community.



Following the inventory and analysis, the RCC turned its attention to developing policy recommendations and strategies. In March 2009 the RCC held another public workshop to gather input about the inventory, the maps, and the proposed recommendations in the draft plan. The RCC incorporated key messages and themes from that workshop into the plan and the recommendations were revised to reflect the feedback.

Inventory and Analysis of Open Space and Natural Resources

The inventory of natural resources for Raymond consists of a series of maps created from data maintained by state environmental agencies. The maps identify the location, extent and type of known natural resources present throughout Raymond. In order to manage and organize this vast body of information, and for analytic purposes discussed later, the various resources were grouped into six resource categories:

- Recreational
- Water Quality
- Habitat
- Environmental/ Health & Safety
- Land Productivity, and
- Vistas.

With the exception of the Vista category, each of these categories is comprised of two or more mapped natural resources.

In some instances, mapped resources include land areas adjacent to some other resource because the land is an important contributor to the functions of the adjacent resource. For example, streams are part of the water quality category, but so is some of the land area adjacent to the stream (i.e., the riparian corridor) because the use and condition of that land influences the water quality of the adjacent primary resource – the stream.



No one single category is been prioritized over another in the inventory. Each are linked and generally described as follows:

1. **Recreational** resources provide places for outdoor recreation including hiking, biking, picnicking, skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, bird watching, boating, fishing, and swimming
2. **Water Quality** resources provide clean surface and ground water and the land resources necessary for preserving clean water and include streams, ponds, rivers, the adjacent riparian uplands and land overlying aquifers.
3. **Habitat** resources protect plant and animal habitat and include natural areas, rare & endangered habitats, and larger areas of unfragmented forest land.

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4. **Environmental, Health & Safety** resources protect people and property from natural hazards like flooding, water supply contamination, and property loss and include flood prone areas, wellhead protection areas, water supply reservoirs, steep slopes and areas with unsuitable soils for development.
5. **Land Productivity** resources provide natural resource-based commodities and include areas such as farms and timber stands that are actively managed and very often critical to local economies.
6. **Vistas** are the natural areas and open spaces in town that are important or high value scenic resources and may be viewed from lakes, public roads and other publicly accessible locations.

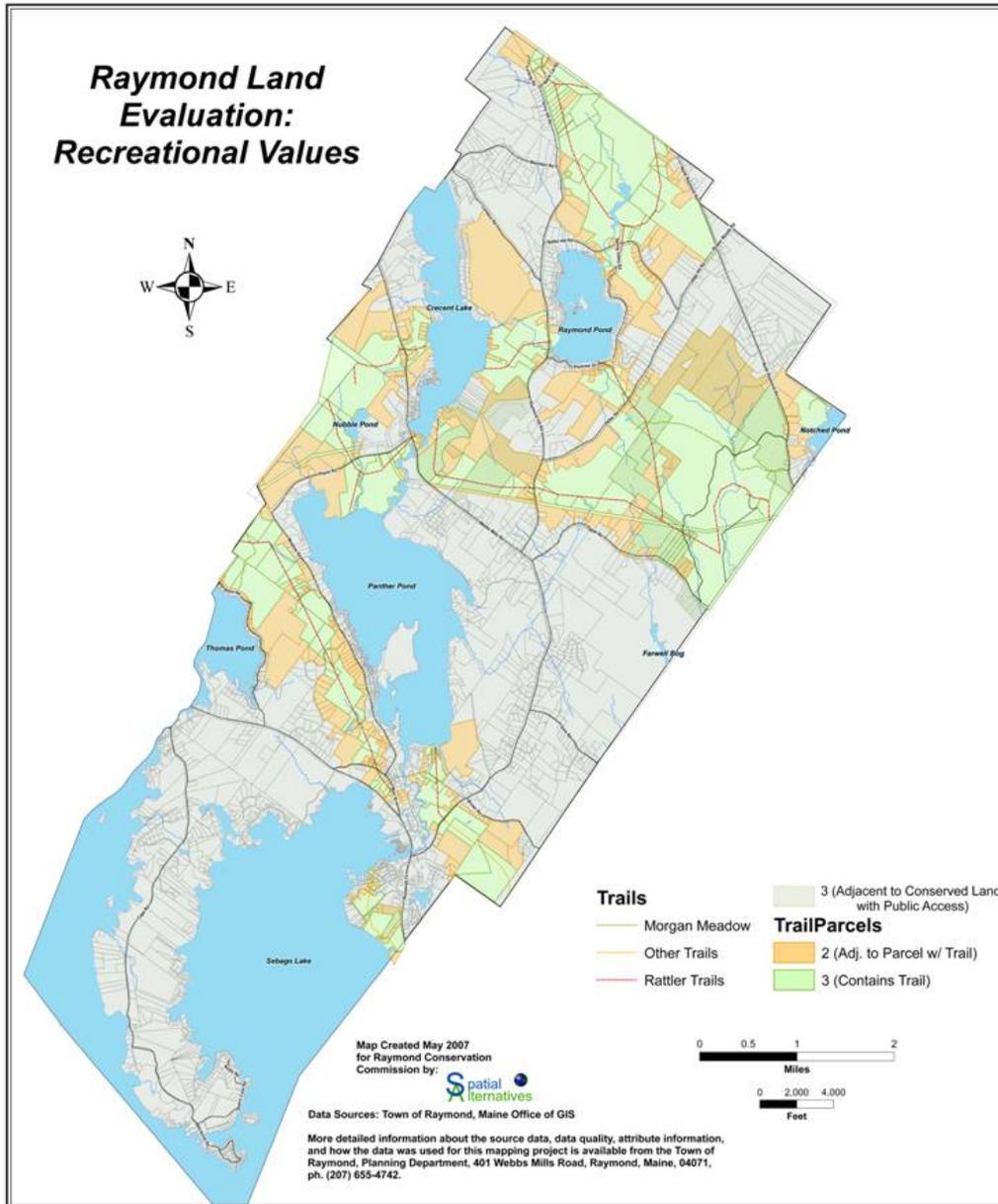
Table 1 sets out each of the functional categories and the resources which were identified and mapped in association with that category.

Table 1

Recreational	Water Quality	Habitat	Environmental, Health & Safety	Land Productivity	Vistas
<i>Public water access</i>	<i>Proximity to Streams</i>	<i>Unfragmented Forested Land</i>	<i>Aquifer Recharge</i>	<i>Forest Land</i>	
<i>Trails</i>	<i>Proximity to Lakes, Ponds, Rivers</i>	<i>Deer Wintering Area</i>	<i>Steep Slopes</i>	<i>Farm Land</i>	
<i>Proximity to Settled Areas</i>	<i>Highly Erodable Soils</i>	<i>Waterfowl Habitat</i>	<i>Flood Plains</i>		
<i>Adjacency to Publicly Accessible Conserved Land</i>		<i>Rare Animal Location</i>	<i>Wellhead Protection</i>		
		<i>Rare Plant Location</i>			
		<i>Adjacent to Conserved Land</i>			

Maps

The inventory maps were created using the best publicly available map data that currently exists for each resource category. Generally, the data came either from Raymond's existing data (such as parcel maps) or from the Maine Office of GIS¹. Where more than one resource exists at the same location, both are depicted so as to display each of the multiple "layers" of resources on the map. All maps show lakes, some streams, major roads, a bar scale, compass and legend to orient the viewer.

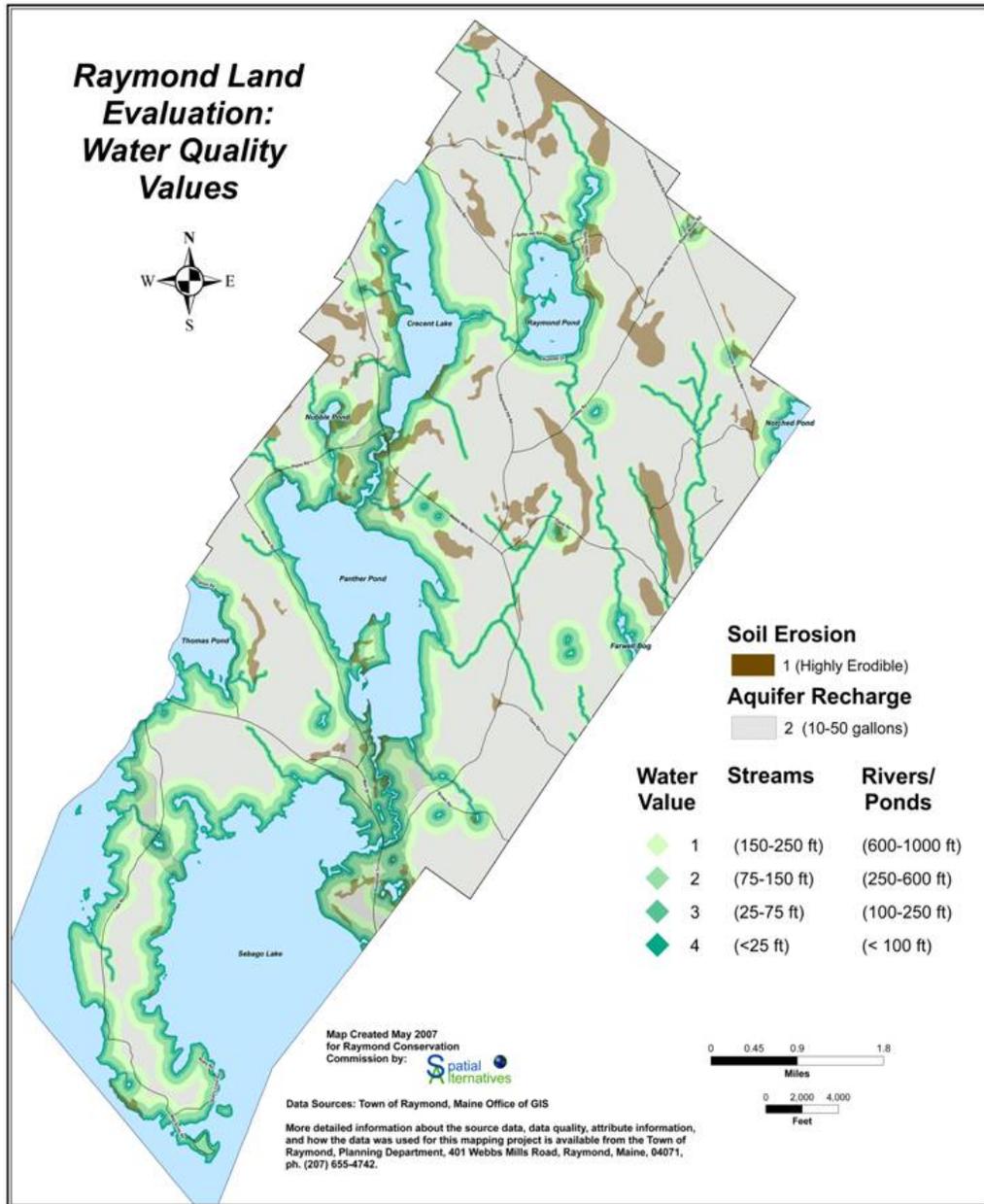


The *Recreation* inventory map (Map 1) includes all conserved land with public access and all parcels adjacent to such conserved land². The map also depicts publicly used trails in town. These do not include all of the recreational trails; only those that are generally recognized as publicly accessible trails.

Map 1

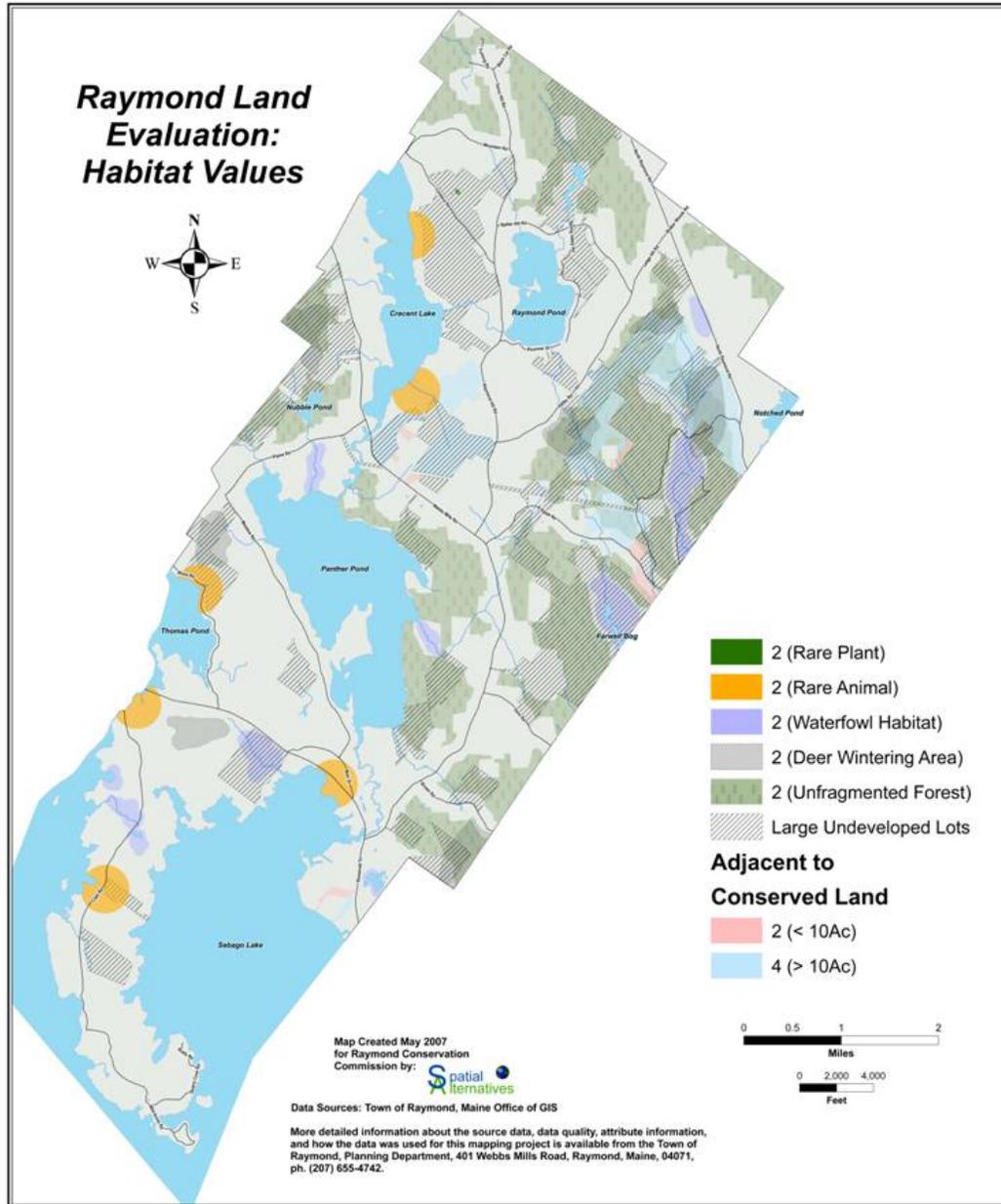
¹ A more detailed description of the source of the data, the proper use of the data, and limitations of the data, is included in the appendix in a document entitled *Description of Raymond Open Space Plan Data*.

² Conservation land depicted on this and other maps in this report is publicly owned land which includes a conservation easement or other protections from development.



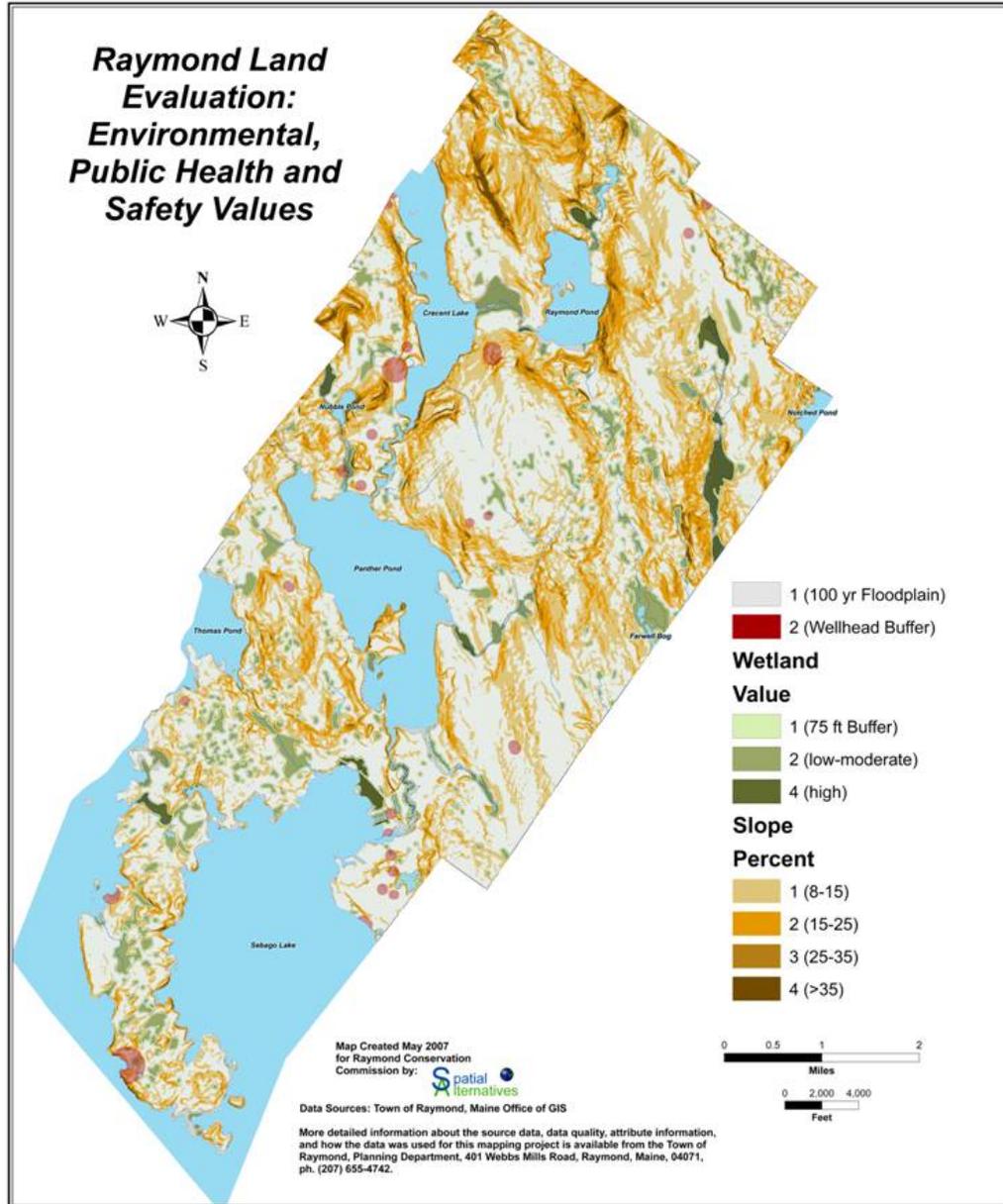
Map 2

The *Water Quality* inventory map (Map 2) shows all mapped streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds along with various buffers from those resources. The map also depicts aquifers, categorized by their likely capacity, and highly erodable soils – as those are soils most likely to cause water quality impacts through any disturbance associated with development activity.



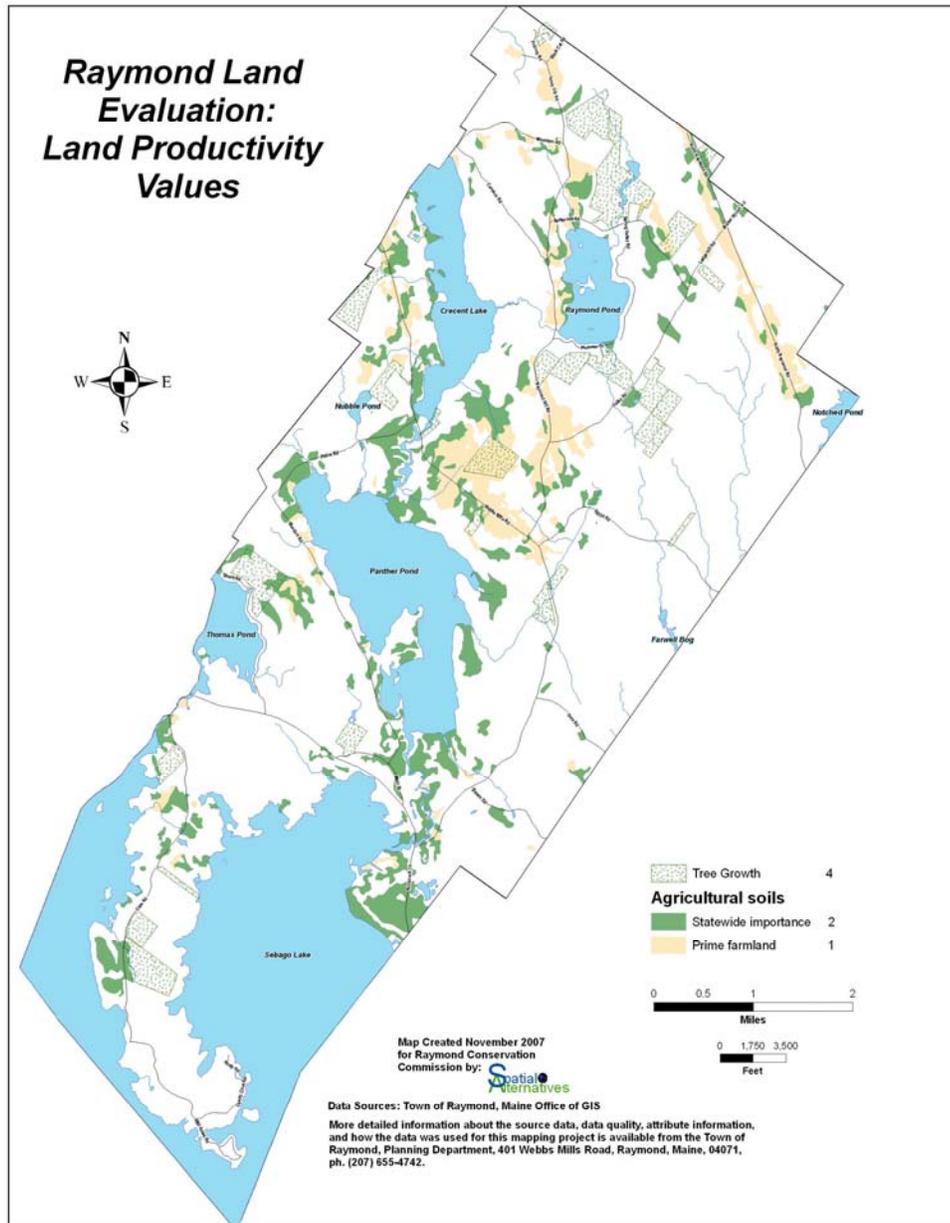
Map 3

The *Habitat* resource inventory map (Map 3) depicts the approximate locations of several types of habitat features. Approximate locations where rare animals or plants have been previously identified, or are known to occur, locations of state-identified waterfowl habitat, and deer wintering areas are shown on the map. Also depicted are open fields and undeveloped blocks – large contiguous areas of land with little or no development or roads. The Map also includes parcels adjacent to conserved land as those areas provide the large contiguous areas that some animals require for habitat.



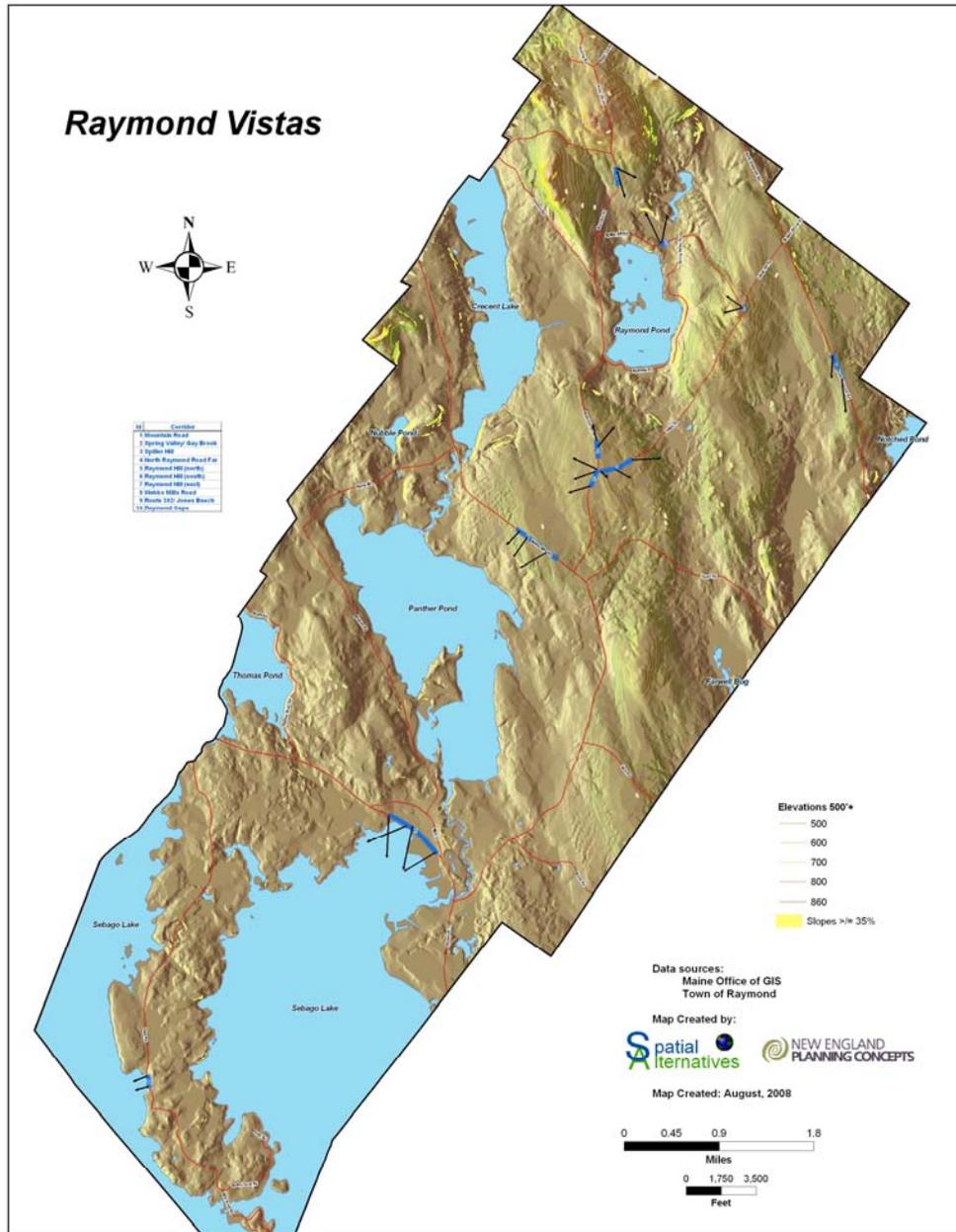
Map 4

The *Environmental, Health And Safety* inventory map (Map 4) includes locations of well buffers - protection areas for public water supply wells (wells that serve institutions, businesses, etc.) - flood plains categorized by the severity of the storm that would likely cause flooding, and slopes of 8% or greater and which are further categorized by their steepness. Also included are the known state-mapped wetlands in Raymond according to their classification based on a system developed by the Maine State Planning Office. Under that system each wetland is rated based on the combinations of ecological functions it serves or the human values it produces. The map further depicts a buffer of 75 feet around wetlands.



Map 5

The *Land Productivity* inventory map (Map 5) shows the location of parcels enrolled in the Farmland taxation program – indicating the land is actively used for agricultural purposes – and parcels enrolled in the Tree Growth taxation program – indicating the land is actively used for silvicultural purposes. Agricultural soils characterized by the National Resource Conservation Service as soils of “statewide importance” or soils that constitute “prime farmland” are depicted on the map as well.

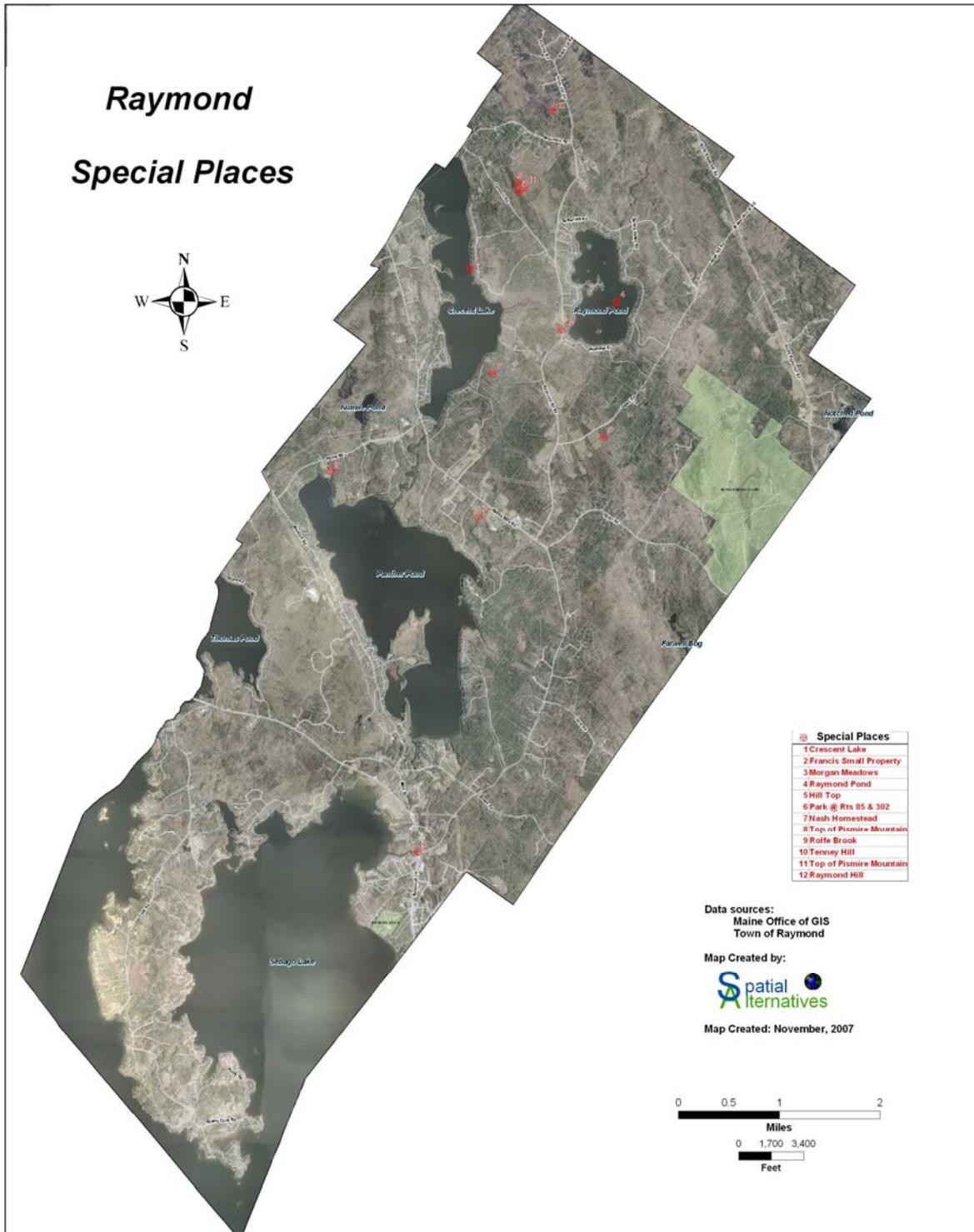


Map 6

The *Scenic Vistas* inventory map (Map 6) shows the higher elevation areas in town and the areas that have the steepest slopes as a way of depicting areas most visible from lakes, public roads and other publicly accessible locations throughout town. The map also identifies the locations along roads (road corridors) in town that provide a publicly accessible place from which important or high value scenic resources may be viewed.

The *Special Places* map (Map 7) was prepared to show locations in Raymond selected by residents who attended a public workshops in December 2007 and March 2009. Not all in attendance participated, but the residents that did, identified the approximate location of

places that are of special significance to them or their family.

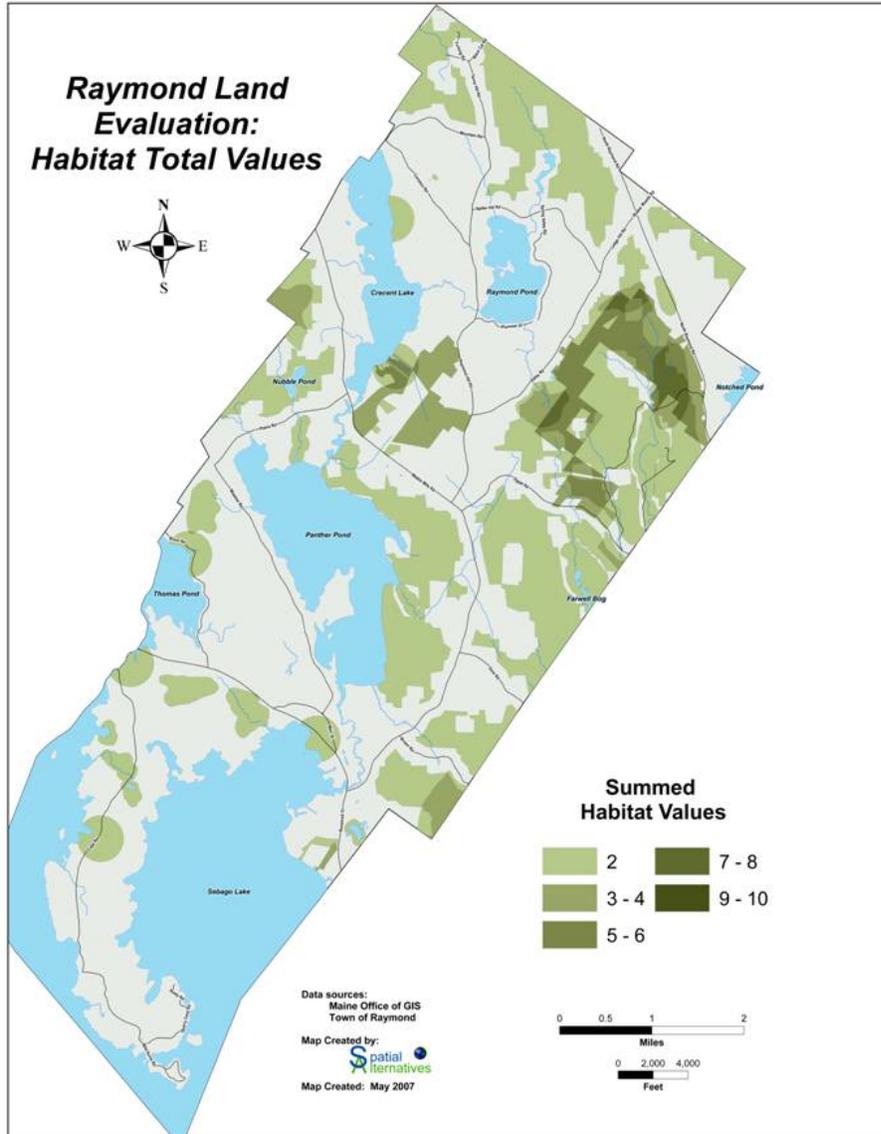


Map 7

Value Analysis

The data collected in the inventory provides the basis for analyzing the relative values of the resources and to map variations in value throughout the town. To better understand this process, it is useful to consider an example. The *Habitat Total Values* map (Map 8) depicts

gradations in the total “score” for habitat functions, with the higher scoring areas in darker green, the lower scoring areas in progressively lighter shades of green, and those areas with relatively limited habitat identified in white. Further detail for this methodology is provided in the appendix.

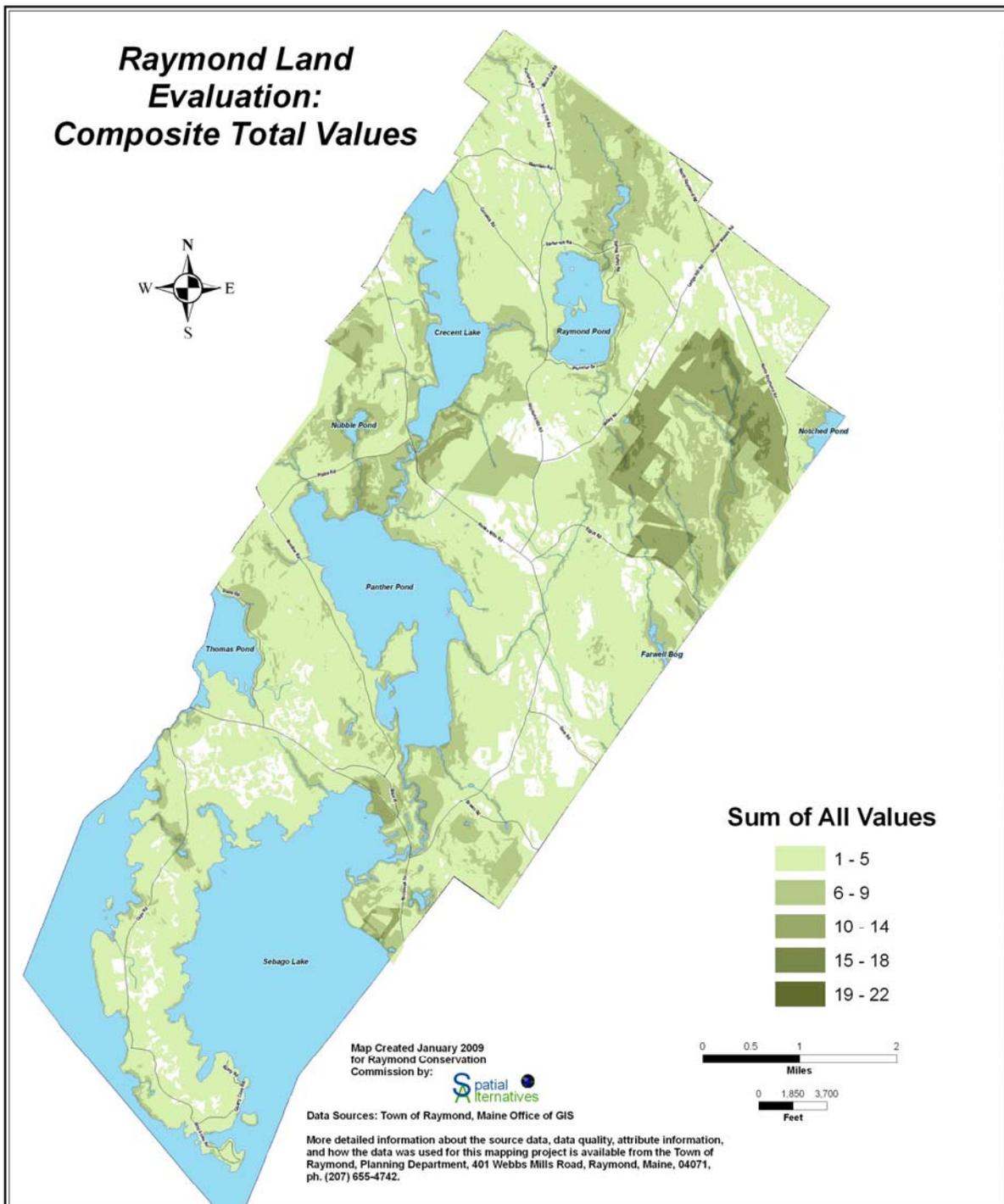


Map 8

scores appear as the lightest shades and those with the highest scores appear as the darker shades. This map reflects the cumulative scores based on each category of resources being equal –there is no distinction between the relative values to the community of any of the six functional categories of resources.

This same value mapping process was repeated for each resource category resulting in six *Total Value* maps which are provided in the appendix.

Finally, the six *Total Value* maps were combined to produce a *Composite Total Values* map (Map 9) depicting the range of total scores of all the resource categories. The areas on the map with the lowest total



Map 9

Community Input

After the inventory maps were complete, the RCC held a public workshop to unveil the inventory of Raymond's open space and natural resources. The workshop was open to anyone who wished to attend but the committee also sent written invitations to all owners of the larger parcels of land in town since most of the resources identified in the inventory are on those larger parcels. Over 40 people with varied interests and perspectives attended and participated in discussions and activities to gauge the concerns and values of the community.



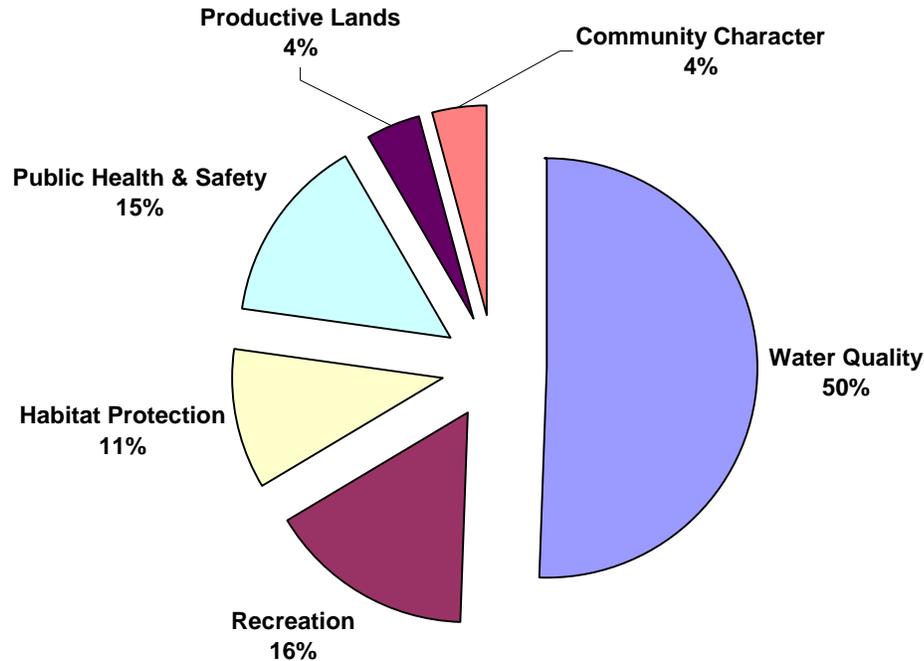
The workshop provided an opportunity for citizens to view the six resource category maps, to learn how the maps were developed, to learn what information was collected for the inventory, and to discuss the planning process and the goals of the RCC.

Following a presentation on the functions of open space and natural resources, the historic and recent growth patterns in Raymond, and the planning process and results to date, everyone broke into smaller groups to discuss open space planning, public open space purchases, strategies for conserving land, and priorities for conservation. Participants were also asked to indicate their conservation priorities through a “value voting” exercise³.

Although the results of the voting exercise should not be viewed as statistical certainty they do provide insight into the preferences, values and concerns of Raymond citizens. Water quality was far and away the resource category receiving the most votes with 50% of the total. Recreation resources and environmental, health & safety resources garnered the next most support with 16% and 15% respectively. Habitat protection received 11% and productive lands and community character received 4% each.

³ In this exercise everyone had 20 make-believe \$5000 bills to put on any or all of the inventory maps representing the six categories of resources as a way of indicating their priorities for conservation. Detailed agendas, discussion questions, and workshop results are contained in the appendices to this plan.

Open Space Categories - Voting Results



Finally, everyone was given the opportunity to identify areas in town that are exceptional to them in some way, whether it be where they walk, ride or ski, a dramatic view, a quiet spot, a choice fishing hole or any other place that has special significance. These locations are shown on the *Special Places* map (Map 7) and are part of an inventory of places that give the community its character and its appeal.

Several themes arose in the small group discussions and during other opportunities for public comment. Many people identified the water quality of Raymond's lakes, streams and rivers as the greatest asset of the town for reasons of health, natural beauty, habitat quality, economic opportunity, property value and more. As one person put it "everything else in town follows from pristine water." Some felt that water quality was also the resource most at risk in town.

Many people observed that as the town has changed, the attitudes and practices concerning access to land have changed. There were interesting and important discussions concerning the rights of landowners and how those might balance with community interest in retaining its character and access to open lands and waterfronts. Concepts around location of development were also a frequent topic of discussion and particularly how the town might find ways to encourage development to occur in such a way that the most highly valued open space resources are preserved.

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The RCC took the information from the December 2007 workshop and along with the resource category maps identified high priority areas for land protection.

In March 2009 the RCC held another public workshop to gather input about the prioritization methodology and mapping and to discuss draft recommendations. The workshop was open to anyone but, as with the December 2007 workshop, the committee sent written invitations to all owners of the larger parcels of land in town. About a dozen people attended, most of who own larger tracts, or are involved in forest management. While some participants indicated they would have a different ranking of priorities -- in particular they would not have ranked water quality as high but would assign higher priority to productivity of open space lands and to recreational opportunities -- in general participants appeared to find the inventory and maps useful and a good representation of the location of highly valued natural resource areas in Raymond.

Most discussion at the March 2009 workshop was about the proposed recommendations or related themes. Many of the participants expressed a preference for conservation easements, rather than fee purchases, as a tool for land conservation. Generally, most participants indicated they would not like to see the town own land for conservation purposes such as preservation of habitat or scenic resources, but that it might be appropriate for the town to purchase land for active recreational purposes such as fields and parks. Most also preferred that town funds only be used in instances when it is clear there is a priority community need or when town funds can be used to leverage significant outside funding.

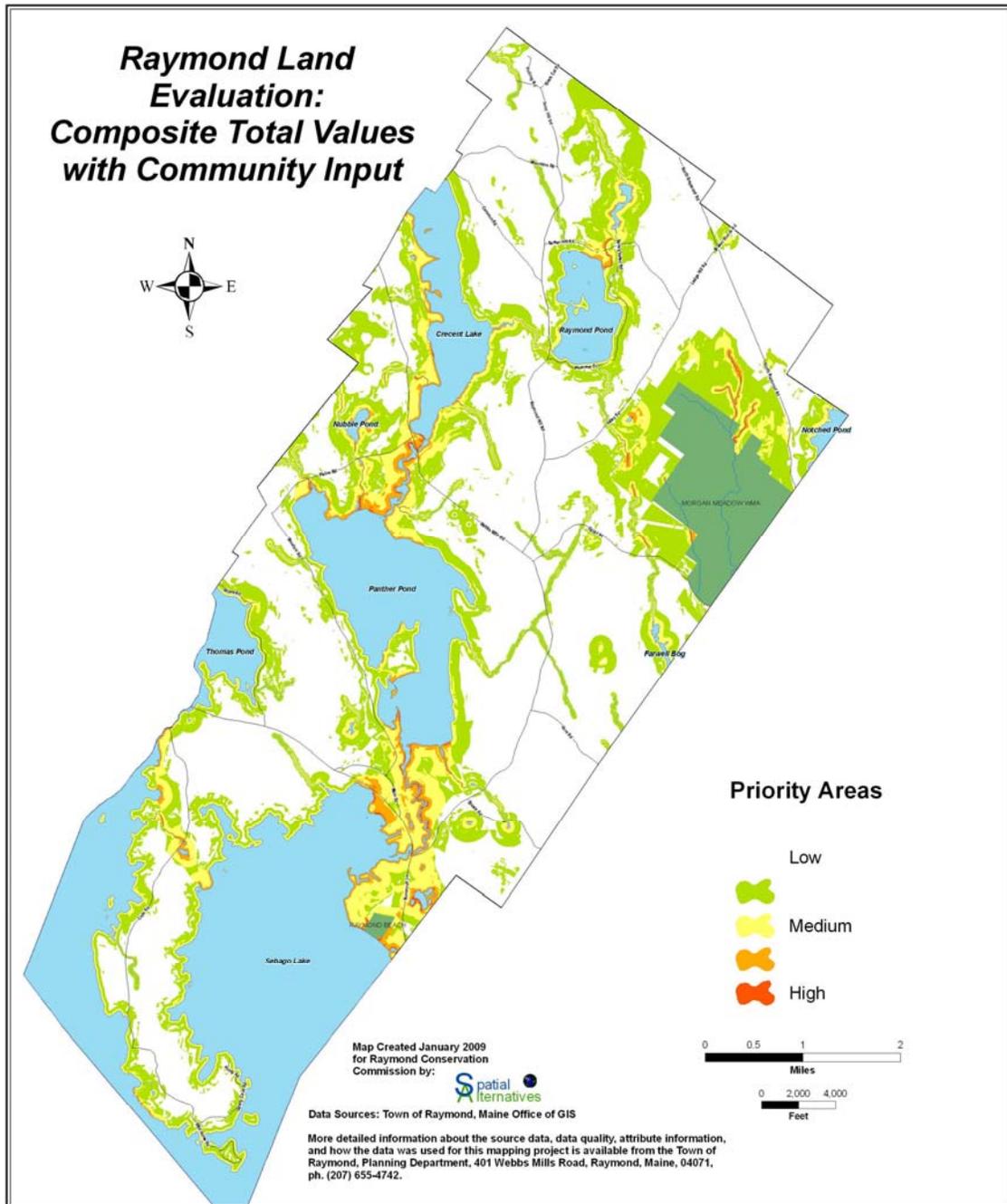
Participants from the workshop generally concurred that private stewardship of undeveloped land is preferable to public stewardship, but also acknowledged that without a conservation easement, or similar restriction on the use of the land, long term preservation is not secure. Those participants also voiced strong opinions that no new regulations be adopted that are more restrictive than those currently in place and that the town not do anything to discourage forestry and, preferably, do things to promote or encourage it.

Several people suggested the town could help keep forest land open and working by addressing tax policies. They expressed the opinion that many landowners believe that the way land is valued and taxed, unfairly burdens landowners and often does not account for the benefits or values the community gets from that open land (in the form of recreation, habitat preservation, water quality preservation, scenic beauty, etc.) . Several participants expressed the view that at the very least, tax policy should not push landowners into developing or selling their land.

Following the March 2009 workshop, some recommendations were revised or supplemented to reflect the input of the participants.

Priority Areas of Open Space and Natural Resources

By providing a sense of community priorities for each resource category, the input from the public workshop allowed for mapping of the town's natural resources based on the inventory data and the values of the community. This value based mapping appears as the *Composite Total Values with Community Input* ("Values with Community Input") map (Map 10).



Map 10

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The *Values with Community Input* map was developed by weighting each inventory category (recreation, water quality, habitat, etc.) by the percentage of the value voting it received at the workshop. The resulting values were then depicted on the map in a color scale ranging from green to yellow to red. The areas on the map with the lower total scores appear in green, medium scores in yellow, higher medium in orange, and the higher scores appear as the red shades.

The *Values with Community Input* map is a generalized depiction that prioritizes areas by the open space and natural resources values to the town. The map does not indicate that areas without color are without natural resource value. The map does indicate that, based on the information available, and according to the values identified in this planning process, the areas depicted in color on the map are likely to be of higher priority for conservation. The map is intended to be a tool for prioritization for open space conservation decision making. It is not intended to be used in regulatory reviews and is not a substitute for detailed onsite land and resource analysis.

The map shows some distinct regions of town that seem to rise above others in importance as natural areas to the town. Those areas are largely, though not exclusively, associated with water bodies and include the areas around Gay Brook, Bartlett Brook, Tenny's River, Nubble Pond & Brook, Panther Run, and the shores of Raymond Pond, Notched Pond, Crescent Lake, Panther Pond, Thomas Pond, and Sebago Lake. The area around Morgan Meadow and Farwell Bog also stands out. The RCC will use this map as it continues in its efforts to identify priority land for protection in Raymond.

Methods for Protecting Raymond's Priority Special Places

Conserving priority land identified by the Open Space Plan will require working closely with land owners who are, or would be, willing sellers of land, or conservation easements that restrict future development on land, at market or other negotiated prices. This Open Space Plan does not recommend the town direct conservation efforts toward any parcel of land unless the landowner is a willing seller.

While there are numerous approaches for securing conservation land, the following basic ownership structures, funding sources, and conservation strategies are identified for protecting land in Raymond:

1. Generally land would be conserved either through the transfer of a **fee ownership** in the land, or through the transfer of a **conservation easement**, from the owner to a conservation entity.
2. Under a transfer of **fee ownership**, the owner transfers the complete “bundle of rights” in the land including development rights. Land conserved through a fee transfer could be owned and managed by a qualified land trust such as Loon Echo Land Trust or the Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine, or by a designated governmental agency.
3. The typical **conservation easement** spells out the purpose and extent of conservation and any right retained by the landowner such as timber harvest and/or agriculture but extinguishes development rights. A conservation easement could be held by a qualified land trust such as Loon Echo Land Trust or the Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine, or by a designated governmental agency.
4. Acquisition of conservation land or a conservation easement could be by **purchase** or **donation** from the owner of the land. Purchase could be at an appraised market price or could be at a lesser negotiated price, sometimes referred to as a “bargain sale.”
5. Funding for the purchase of land or a conservation easement could come from **public funds, private funds**, or a **mix** of the two. Public funding sources may include competitive bid **grants** such as the Land for Maine's Future fund, the Outdoor Heritage Fund or other state or federal grant sources. Private funding sources include **grants** and **donations** from land trusts, foundations (i.e The Maine Community Foundation), or other private individuals or entities.
6. Some public funding from the town is already in place through the **Raymond Open Space Fund** which currently has a balance of approximately \$45,000. Supplemental town funds for land conservation could be raised at Town Meeting either through a bond, specific warrant article, or general fund surplus.

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7. The town's **Open Space Fund** could be used to supplement or leverage any public or private funds for purchase of land or conservation easements, or to purchase land that meets a priority community need.

It is likely that any conservation project may use elements from each of the above methods and could also use other approaches or resources.



Implementation

In order for Raymond to plan for, and be ready to implement in a timely manner, land conservation projects that meet the goals of supporting working lands, linking open spaces, creating trail systems, and preserving the community character, the following recommendations are made:

Open Space Plan Goals

- Develop Open Space Plan that engages the community
 - Inventory and identify our most valuable Natural Resources
 - Support and promote working forests and agriculture
 - Link open spaces
 - Maintain and create trail systems for recreation (hiking, skiing, biking, snowmobiling, hunting, ATV [where appropriate])
 - Preserve our community character - one of exceptional land and water quality, recreational opportunity and natural resources that are vital to the local economy
-

1. Engage in discussions with owners of land identified as higher priority for conservation to begin a conversation about land protection and explore which methods of protection would best meet the needs of the landowner and the Town.
2. Engage with the Selectmen and the Budget Committee to identify the course of action for raising town funds and to identify concerns and information requirements that the boards may have in order to effectively respond to them.
3. Identify the time line and application process for state, federal, and private grant funding cycles and the level of effort to prepare a winning proposal.
 - a. Apply for grants or acquisition funds from private foundations and/or federal and state public funds (including the Land & Water Conservation Fund, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and Land For Maine's Future)
4. Work cooperatively with neighboring towns, land trusts (such as Loon Echo Land Trust) and regional or statewide conservation entities in order to leverage funding opportunities and conservation capacity and experience.
 - a. Build relationships for information sharing and joint planning between and among the RCC and these groups.
5. Assemble and provide information for landowners about incentives and technical assistance designed to keep working land open and working (such as tax reduction programs and technical or business assistance).
6. Make the Open Space Plan and maps readily available to the Raymond landowners and citizens so they can view them and become familiar with the information.

Appendices

- A. All maps (11" X 17")
- B. Functions and values matrix
- C. Public workshop materials
- D. Additional information on Conservation Strategies and Funding
- E. Description of Raymond Open Space Plan Data
- F. Maine Landowner Liability Law
- G. Recommendations for additional study and information gathering



The Committee wishes to acknowledge several sources that served as inspiration from which portions of the plan's structure and content were taken - *Beginning with Habitat: An Approach to Conserving Maine's Landscape for Plants, Animals and People (2003)*; *Collaborative Land Use Planning in the Mt. Agamenticus Region (2006)*; *Readfield Open Space Plan (2006)*; *Royal River Region Conservation Plan (2005)*; *The Greening of Falmouth (2005)*; and *From The River To The Bay: A Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan For Brunswick, Maine (2002)*; and the *Casco Open Space Plan (2006)*.